

HAZARDS IDENTIFICATION AND RISK ASSESSMENT

BINGHAM COUNTY

Hazards considered in Bingham County were judged as only those, which could possibly occur. While the list is rather inclusive, future circumstances may dictate that other hazards be considered. If this proves to be the case, they will be added at the appropriate time during Plan reviews and updates.

Each of these hazards has some possibility of occurrence within the county boundaries. A brief discussion about each of the hazards and its relevance to Bingham County is as follows:

High Winds are an ever-present possibility within the county. At various times of the year, high winds are experienced in every part of the county. On an annual basis, there will generally be winds in some locations that exceed 50 mph, even though the average wind speed is much lower. As a result, high winds must be considered and, overall ranks highest of all the hazards – in large part due to the frequency of occurrence. At the same time, high winds generally do not do a large amount of damage because the structures are generally built for such winds.

Loss of Electrical Service occurs many times per year in various localities. Loss of electrical power is disruptive to all affected business, farms and residences and extended outages, though rare, can cause severe economic problems. Loss of electrical service should be considered as often related to other hazards such as winds, winter storms, lightning, fire, etc. Generally, if loss of electrical service is related to or triggered by other hazards, then the power outage is lengthier than if some transmission line component has failed.

Severe Winter Storm is a hazard that can and has happened, and which generally will cause blockage of the roads. Power outages can be related to such storms, but severe ice storms are not known in the area and power outages are generally the result of excessive wind during a winter storm. Long power outages during winter storms have not been a problem, but road blockage has been in a number of locations. Cold is a problem if loss of power is long-term.

Crime is an ever-present hazard. No area is immune to crime and a large percentage of local budgets are dedicated to paying for services needed to deal with crime. In considering the relationship of crime, the fact is that crime has a frequent occurrence relative to other hazards, but the affected are generally very small.

Lightning is a hazard in the county, but not as great as some areas. Damage is mostly to tree, power lines, and structures. On rare occasions it may cause injury or death.

Major Fire – Urban occurs on occasion, however, there has generally been no fire that involved more than one or two structures. Thus this hazard is rated accordingly.

Flooding is a hazard that affects parts of Bingham County and can be expensive and disruptive. The breaking of the Teton Dam, though an extremely rare occurrence, reminds us that such things can happen. Most of the areas in Bingham County are on high ground areas, but even these can be subject to spring run-off flooding. In general, the worst, repetitive areas are along the Snake River, and to a lesser extent, the Blackfoot River. Not considered in this plan is the possibility of the breach of the Blackfoot Reservoir Dam, Ririe Reservoir Dam, or the Palisades Dam. Loss of any of those dams would be result in major flooding and property loss and probably loss of life.

Hazardous Materials exist almost everywhere. They flow up and down the highways, streets, roads, and railroads, and can be found in numerous agriculture chemical stores, on farms, in factories and businesses. The evaluations in this plan are based on experience and potential. Please note that once illegal meth labs are identified, the clean up is considered under the heading of hazardous materials. The identification of the labs is considered under “crime”.

Drought is a somewhat frequent occurrence when lack of rain/snowfall is considered. However, the area of Bingham County is underlain by a very large aquifer. In severe drought conditions, the aquifer level could drop, so that wells must be drilled deeper, but this is not thought to be a problem, so far as human health is concerned. It would likely be a problem for farmers who depend on the water for raising crops.

Hail occurs within the county every year, but normally does little damage, although it generally does some damage somewhere. The major damage is generally in the form of damaged crops.

Loss of Water Service is a hazard that can and does occur, but within the urban areas, most have redundant water systems and supplies. All water supplies come from the aquifer and so a loss of source is highly unlikely. Loss of individual water supplies on farms and in urban areas does occur from equipment breakage and the like, but is not judged as a large hazard. Loss of water service can cause a loss of fire protection and increase the fire hazard risk.

Economic Crisis can cause a great deal of disruption as evidenced by the Great Depression. The area employers and businesses are varied, and with the large agriculture base, the area would be as robust as most anywhere.

Infestation/Disease fits in a category of something that is possible, happens to some extent, but due to the low population density, the effect is generally less than in more densely populated areas.

Telecommunications is a likely problem, but is much less likely than in the past. Most of the telecommunications lines are underground, which reduces the frequency of problems.

Major Fire – Wild Land is a problem for some of the outlying areas in the county. The interface between wild lands and farms, or some communities can be problematic in a dry year. Some farms have experience fire problems in the past.

Key Employer Crisis can be a problem, however, the working population is spread over many employers. The largest single employer for the entire county area is at the Idaho National Laboratory, but even there, there are different contracts and activities, and so while economic slumps tend to happen, the overall effect is somewhat less than other areas.

Civil Disturbance is a hazard that has not really surfaced in Bingham County, but is considered as possible.

Earthquake is likely in Bingham County, but while they have been felt, the normal earthquake pattern is such that most occur in the surrounding mountains and the effect of the quake is much less in the county.

Terrorism is considered as a possibility although not too likely. Nevertheless, it is best to acknowledge the reality of today's hazards. Schools may be of greatest vulnerability.

Loss of Gas Service is highly unlikely for any length of time. Wintertime would pose the greatest hardship and challenge. A good part of the county is sparsely settled and so natural gas lines are not available for heating in any case.

Loss of Sewer Service is considered as possible, but not likely of any long-term significance. Most of the county rural areas have individual sewer systems for each home.

Radiological is a very low probability with low consequences – perhaps the greatest consequence would be psychological.

Landslide, Erosion hazards have minimal probability and likely small consequences in the area. Some mountainous areas have had small landslides in remote areas.

Subsidence/Expansive soils are rare in the area and are considered of very low probability or consequence.